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CHAPTER II

A PICTURE OF EVERYDAY THINGS

A visitor's impressions of the manners and interests of the people—a glimpse of a village and its huts, of the preparation of food and etiquette in eating, and of the decorum of drinking beer—the evening scene, with its hearth fires, riddles, and stories—the seasonal calendar of activities.

As you drive along the winding road on a visit to Mujaji's reserve, you find yourself in a narrow valley between the two ranges of Dulovedu mountains, where flows the Mulodozi River, fed by countless streams from the bush-covered slopes above. It is the month of March. The mealies in the fields, visible on all sides through the bushy vegetation, stand dark green and high, appearing to grow right to the very doorsteps of the villages you pass. At first and to the untrained eye the country seems relatively empty, so well do the dwellings merge into the general view. On looking more closely, however, you see cluster after cluster of conical, thatched roofs peeping out from the bush on the hillsides, some of them perched on ledges like eagles' eyries. For the reserve is in reality very thickly populated. The villages are small, five to fifteen huts being the average size; a few large villages of from forty to eighty huts represent the old order of things, just as those of only two huts do the new. But the Lovedu village was never very large and never could compare, either in size or arrangement, with the great towns of the Tswana and of some Sotho.

As you go down a steep dip to cross a stream, a sullen-looking woman balancing a wide-mouthed basket on her head, her legs heavy with leg rings which reach almost up to the knee, suspiciously turns her back on you. She wears a cloth of red salampore behind and before, knotted on the shoulders; while from her neck dangles the ubiquitous snuff box on a necklet of plaited string, black with dirt, but holding three or four treasured heirlooms, large deep-blue or white beads and perhaps some small blue, red, and yellow ones of the kind that were brought from Rhodesia long before the European had come. A little further on you hear a shout, '*Makhuwa, Makhuwa*' (Europeans, Europeans), as a group of herdboys runs towards the road. The younger ones among them, mere toddlers playing outside their village, scurry away crying to their mothers, and scatter the chickens from the ash-heap as they do so. A herdboy, wearing nothing but his loin covering and an old tattered coat which was once his father's, shouts 'Move Baas,' European words he has picked up from his elders; but the rest run joyfully after the car, rending the air with their shrieks.

The road begins to ascend steeply up the hill to the capital, but here, if you wish to visit headman Raselaka, you must get out and walk. As you go in single file along the narrow footpath, bounded on either side by creeper-covered bush or long grass higher than your shoulders, you become aware of a strong smell somewhat reminiscent of turpentine. In a few moments you discover its cause—the ripening fruits of the

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857
291
415
292
301
535

VII. ADOLESCENCE

(a) REALISTIC PLAY-COOKING IN THE MANDWANE

(b) A TROUPE OF YOUTHFUL DANCERS

[facing p. 112]

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264
415
291
301

273
415
291
301

XI. DOMESTIC DUTIES

(a) DISHING UP REQUIRES GREAT SKILL

(b) STRAINING THE PRECIOUS BEER BREW

[facing p. 144]

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787
291

782
301
291

XIV. THE PURSUIT OF HEALTH

(*a*) DIAGNOSING THE CAUSE OF ILLNESS
(*b*) THE KHADI POURS BEER TO APPEASE THE ANCESTORS

[facing A 209]